

American Politics and Media Relations

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Abstract. The American news media plays a vital role in the American political activities. It has long been regarded as the "fourth power" to exercise supervisory functions beyond administrative, legislative and judicial functions, and the "fourth branch" in cooperation with the actions of government, Congress and the Supreme Court. However, the freedom of the press in America is not unlimited. Media can influence politics, but the same government can influence, restrict and use media. Therefore, studying the connection between the US news media and the government, by clarifying the relationship between the two, we can partly grasp the limited reasons for the US press freedom and help a better understanding of American politics.

Keywords: Media; government; interactive relationship.

1. Introduction

Canadian media leader John McLuhan predicted that the global village would emerge in the mid-200st century. The idea of a global village holds that information can reach any corner of the world. With the deepening of economic globalization, the media is also globalization, and the media plays an increasingly important role in state relations. People in the world tend to know about other countries through the news media, and to evaluate other countries according to the information provided by the news media. Those news media that can provide news and information and guide international public opinion will become the leading role in forming the image, cognition, understanding and even feelings of other countries. Due to the own interests of the media and political ideology, the western media, with their strong economic strength, constantly monitor major events in the world, seize the highest point of international public opinion, and strive for the initiative and dominant position in the international public opinion war. (Zhihai, Z, 2008) now the American media has appeared in many countries and regions in the world, a large number of international media companies or groups belong to the United States, from news to entertainment, from politics to economy, the American media products distributed all over the world, the United States is now the world's largest media industry, has a huge impact on international affairs. (child.C, 2020)

"The New York Times has the same influence in the United States. In 1971, when the United States was trapped in the battlefield in Vietnam, the New York Times published the core content of the US Department of Defense document "the decision-making process in the US in Vietnam" (called the Pentagon document), which triggered an anti-war boom among the domestic people and eventually led to the U. S. government withdrawing from the Vietnam War.

However, while the media plays an important role in American political life, it also depends on politics, as well as on political power. There is no absolute freedom of the press in the world, either. Even in free and independent America, "free" press releases are not completely free.

Although the American media has always been proud of its press freedom, the American government has always claimed that it respects the freedom of the press and that the government uses various means to control the news media when the media violates government interests. As early as during the American Civil War, the US military issued an order requiring all war journalists to submit their manuscripts to their military and police commanders for approval. During World War II, President Roosevelt issued an executive order, established the News Inspectorate, and promulgated the American Newspaper Code of Conduct, which strictly regulated the release of news information. And the censorship of the press by the US government during the Gulf War was the most extensive review of all the wars in history. All text and radio reports have to be checked before publication, and those waving the flags of "patriotism" and "national security" completely exceed the constitutional

freedom of the press. It can be seen that in the face of a series of control policies implemented by the press in the name of "national security" and "national interest", the news media are not only unable to raise opinions, but also dare not cross the border.

To sum up, the relationship between the news media and politics is gradually becoming clear. On the one hand, the formation of news largely depends on the development of political activities, and the development of various political activities also depends on the media publicity and reporting. On the other hand, the power given by the news media according to the law has to some extent affected the choice of politicians, affected the formation of the government's political policies, and changed the political structure. To some extent, the government influences the formation of news and controls the news media. The media influence the ups and downs of news figures. Media and politics are inseparable, and they are interdependent and influence each other.

2. Literature review

Journalism and communication circles in Europe and America, especially in North America, have a long history of studying the relationship between the US government and the media. As communication research in North America emphasizes the use of effective empirical research, it also reflects its tendency to serve politics in the study of US government and media relations. In the current western communication research, the relationship between the US government and the media also shows a tendency of pragmatism. The research contents mainly include political publicity and media, media content and politics, political participation and media, political figures and media, policy making and media, external publicity and media, etc. For example, representatives of empirical schools, such as Rasville, promote and disseminate research through empirical and scientific approaches. These research directions inspired the role of the later US government in the political propaganda media.

There is a lot of research done from a political perspective. For example, Lippman's most influential work, *The Public Opinion*. The book provides a comprehensive review of the formation, function, and dissemination of public opinion. For example, the political scientist Cohen proposed the agenda-setting theory, and summarized the connotation of this theory when discussing the role of newspapers. McCombs and Shaw further deepen this theory. They illustrate the agenda-making function of mass communication. In the web age, transmitters, recipients, channels, and content have all changed greatly, which poses great challenges to traditional agenda-setting theories. On this basis, many scholars began to study the adjustment and development of the agenda setting theory in the network communication environment. For example, the emergence of social media has driven research into the reverse agenda-setting theory. Some scholars have examined the relationship between the US government and the media from the perspective of news and communication. Its study of the relationship between the government and the media is inseparable. For example, the Emmereries explain the development of American journalism in their classic book, *"A History of American Journalism"*.

Chinese scholars are rich in research materials and journal papers on US government and media relations, but from the perspective of time, most of them were concentrated before 2013. Several major wars and 9 / 11 events in the United States have greatly interested domestic scholars in how the U. S. government uses each other with the media. In the choice of media types, Chinese scholars also mainly focus on traditional media, especially TV channels and newspapers. Scholars reveal in various aspects how the US government uses the media for political communication, and how the media plays games with the government, mainly based on historical classifications and descriptions of key events. For example, Ming Anxiang's *"An Analysis of the relationship between the American News Media and the Government"*, and Shan Bo and Xiao Jun's *" Why is the media the selling point of war? The Analysis of the American Media Transfer before and after the Iraq War, The Washington Post Analysis of the Iraq War Report by Luo Yicheng and Ye Xiaohua, and Liu Chen's The New Development of Government and Media Relations in the United States since the 21st Century.*

Moreover, some scholars examine the freedom of the press from a critical perspective by analyzing the relationship between the US government and the media.

For example, in Ming An Xiang's *How the American Press Is Free*, the relationship between American elections and new media in the social media era is analyzed. Other papers analyze how U. S. government departments use social media to communicate. For example, "How to regulate the Development and Operation of the US Government We-Media" written by Zheng Lei, Zheng Libo and Jiangsu Jia. Domestic scholars discuss a small number of works directly related to the media relations between the US government, among which the representative ones are Ye Zaichun's "Research on the Relations between the American News Media and the Government 1990-2010)", Shen Guolin's "Control communication: Media Publicity of the US Government", and Gong Tie's "How the US Government deals with the news media".

3. Sources of media power

Freedom of the press in the United States is not a dead letter. The power of the media is protected by law. The Constitution of the United States of America and the Freedom of Information Act are major legal guarantees of media rights in the United States.

3.1 The Constitution of the United States of America

The United States Constitution clearly states and guarantees the American public freedom of speech, publication and American media coverage from scrutiny. Article 1 of the 1791 Amendment to the United States Constitution (also known as the Bill of Rights) clearly states that Congress must not make laws that deprive freedom of speech or publication. (Wei, Z, 2020) This means that any American citizen can avoid unprovoked, illegal interference, restraint, or punishment by using mass media to spread their views, ideas, claims, and beliefs to others and society. Freedom of the press means that the government must not interfere with the legitimate speech of the people.

3.2 The Freedom of Information Act

The FOIA Act was born in 1967. Its most important breakthrough lies in changing the principle of confidentiality and the exception of openness. This is arguably a milestone in opening up government information. The Act stipulates that citizens may apply to consult and copy documents from any level of government agencies; government agencies must publish organizational and organizational procedures, methods, and projects to receive information consultation, search, and provide classified indexes of information, citizens can file lawsuits to the judiciary, and should be given priority by the courts. However, for national interest and security reasons, the Act also provides nine "exceptions": classified documents identified as national security or foreign policy; documents on "internal personnel systems and operations of the federal government" and personal safety. The FOIA favors public information and information in general, but in most cases, only media workers will ask the government to provide information and information, and therefore can be considered a legal prerequisite for the news media to restrain the government.

4. The way that the media influence the government

There is no denying that the US media has a significant influence on the government. The main ways to affect the government are mainly as follows.

4.1 Set the agenda

Agenda setting is the process in which news media arrange information and then disclose it to the public. It can be said that the media can decide what these "new" news really are. (Xiaohong, W, 2005) The content of media communication determines the information received by the public, while

the way of classification and selection determines the distribution of the public's attention to each problem. When the mass media focuses on some issues and weakens some information that it does not want to spread, the public naturally pays attention to the information that the media want to convey, thus shaping the awareness of the importance of each issue. That is the setting of the agenda. Overall, the first reported events always attracted more attention than the later reported events. In the public eye, events reported more times are naturally more important than fewer times. "Agenda setting" can be traced back to Lippman's "Public Opinion", published in 1922, which was known as the basis of the agenda-setting theory. American media scholars Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw examined the impact of several newspaper and television reports from Chapel Hill on presidential election coverage. (Zheng, Y, 2021) They believe that mass communication has the function of forming a social "agenda", and the communication media raises various issues of "significance" to different degrees, which affects the focus of public attention and the cognition of the social environment.

The media agenda affects the public agenda and is a basic process of traditional agenda making. Traditional media has always played a key role in the U. S. presidential election until Internet media, social media, and other new media intervened in political communication in the United States. Since the 1830s, mass media has been the most important intermediary medium in political communication. The strong agenda-making ability of the mass media requires that any candidate communicate politically through them to win. In the early 2000s, traditional media was the main access channel for the American public until 2004, when the Internet began to appear, and campaign websites and news websites became the main public access to campaign information. The 2008 US campaign site began building links to traditional mainstream media, regularly updating content, forwarding media articles, and began playing videos. As a turning point in the flow of US election information channels, Mr. Obama, who communicates directly with the public through digital media, is known as the "President of the Internet." In 2012, social media became a canvassing tool, and traditional media was no longer the main channel for candidates to spread campaign information, dropping sharply even during the year.

The 2016 US presidential election entered the era of new media. Trump, the first Internet celebrity president in the United States, is very good at building his personal images through social media and live streaming platforms. During the campaign, Trump built his huge social network with his accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media, and had nearly 30 million followers on Facebook and Twitter during the campaign. About two weeks to go before the US presidential election, he also launched an evening campaign show on his personal Facebook page. Facebook's statistics also showed Trump at 56 percent and Clinton at 44 percent. Other figures show that Americans have spent more than 1,284 general election years studying Mr. Trump's messages on social media. In 2016, the Trump phenomenon managed to form an irresistible force on social media. Clinton, she seems, is less good at using social media than Trump's views. The results show that the more people influence on social media, the greater the chances of success (Rong, Y, 2018).

The Watergate affair was a political scandal that exposed Nixon's illegal conduct during the 1972 campaign. Watergate initially did not attract media attention, and the "Washington Post" had no public attention as most media coverage focused on the presidential election. This indicates the impact of the media agenda on the public agenda. As the scandal did not become the agenda of the press at the time, Nixon won a landslide victory. Media coverage has surged as a major political scandal has turned into a scandal involving multiple government officials. The congressional hearings were followed closely by all the major US television stations. The live broadcast of the hearing drew great public attention to the Watergate incident, with 85% saying they watched the hearing.

4.2 Guiding public opinion

The formulation of the agenda has laid a certain foundation for guiding public opinion. Chinese scholar Chen Shaoxu pointed out in his article on the relevance of agenda formulation and Public opinion Guidance that the so-called guidance of public opinion is the function of communicators to influence public opinion by organizing, processing and selecting relevant information. The media is

able to guide public opinion because it is difficult for the general public to consider all the information they know when assessing a complex event or phenomenon. Instead, they consider something that often appears in their minds, and the media can shape and guide that preference. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw noted that the media value an event or issue proportional to the audience's problem or time, and the more the media focuses, the more the public pays attention. The media builds the image of the entire event or problem in the mind of the audience. The audience relies on the media to get the information it needs. Therefore, the media determines what the audience can see and what they can't see. For example, the Time report on Iraq has no positive wording or even neutral statements, but the most hateful words about freedom and democracy: dictatorship, tyranny, repression and terrorism that hurt the fragile nerves of Americans most. These reports constantly remind the American people of the painful experience of September 11, making the Iraq war the only or best way for the American people to solve terrorism and save the Iraqi people living under tyranny. Thus, before the Iraq war, domestic public opinion remained highly consistent and highly supportive of the Iraq war.

The role of the media in guiding public opinion was also confirmed in the Watergate incident. Television media as an effective tool for political communication has improved American understanding of Watergate. When Nixon deposed Special Attorney John Cox, the major American networks immediately interrupted their normal programming to report the explosive news to the American public. The public reacted like a volcanic eruption, with protest cables and public opinion comparing Nixon to Hitler. Publications that initially supported Nixon angrily blamed Nixon. College students organized mass demonstrations, sounding car horns and demanding the impeachment of the president. The whole state was very angry. Therefore, the media reported the incident, attracted public attention and generated a large amount of public opinion. Media information bombardment and video stimulation are prone to immediate public sentiment and public pressure (Zijun, H, 2015)

4.3 It provides a basis for policy formulation or selection

The formation of public views and perception of an event depends on the media coverage. For most government officials in Washington, the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, the Washington Post, and other important newspapers are read daily. The three broadcasters are the focus of their day starting by browsing the news. (Guolin, S, 2006)

The American media influences public opinion through its own reports, while the government uses polls or polls as the basis for whether to adopt policies. On the other hand, many large media groups in the US have abundant human and financial resources. They even get certain information more quickly than government intelligence, which can also be used to help policymakers develop policies. Chinese President Chen Chong found that Gallup's forecast of the US presidential election were highly consistent with the actual results from 1936 to 2008 Gallup's record of poll accuracy in presidential elections (Chong, C, 2009) And " There is no evidence that the media itself has forced government officials to change policy." In some cases, the media can largely influence the decision-making process because" without any major legislation from the US Congress, any foreign venture, any diplomatic activity, any major social reform can succeed unless the media cultivates the public mind." (Juanli, L, 2013)

The final result of the Watergate event was facilitated by people and ultimately The House decided to impeach the president, and Nixon was under pressure to resign. Therefore, the government will also be greatly affected by the public opinion in the decision-making process.

4.4 Regulatory power

French political scientists have described the mass media as the media are like powerful eyes, which vividly reveals the basic fact that while people increasingly rely on the relationship between the mass media and the living environment, the power factor is active in the inevitable connection between people and the media. In Discipline and Punishment, French scholar Michel Foucault proposed the theory of "super panoramic prison", and people in society are in the panoramic prison,

and "supervision" is the key word of this theory. Foucault points to the unpleasant finding that all people are involved in this self-building process, making themselves the subject of standardized surveillance in Super Panorama prisons. In this process, it is the power of the mass media to assist in the supervision. (Siquang, G, 2006)

The US media supervises the government in three main ways: fact disclosure, public opinion polls, and political commentary. Disclosure of facts affects the direction of public opinion, and the results of public opinion polls stimulate policymakers to put pressure on further measures that the government faces. Political commentary refers to the analysis, discussion and even criticism of internal and external government policies in different ways. Political commentary can be conducted by an average media writer or a professional and influential critic. Policymakers not only value their comments, but also worry about their criticism and opposition on certain issues. Because these criticisms and opposition may lead to their policy to lose enough popular support.

The formation of public opinion has a strong national censorship force, and its biggest advantage is that it can timely put all bureaucracy and illegal acts under the public, show its original form, and produce irresistible critical force. The news media did not miss any signs of misconduct in the President Nixon Watergate scandal and the Bush sex scandal, but the media showed the role of media supervision.

5. Government restrictions on the media

Comparing all the countries in today's international community, we can find that the mass media in the United States may have the greatest and widest power. But it should be pointed out that it is not omnipotent and uncontrolled in the United States. In addition to being limited by its own capabilities and market competition, the American media also faces pressure from the government, the public, and interest groups. The main limitation, of course, came from the government. The government is not only the main source of rich information resources needed by the media, but also regulates and restricts the mass media through a series of legal provisions and institutional jurisdiction mechanisms. In particular, we need to point out that the US government has different restrictions on the media in domestic and foreign affairs, especially when there will be more restrictions in wartime. According to the different degrees of government intervention in media, the government's restrictions on media can be divided into: influence, control and utilization.

5.1 The Government's influence on the media

The government is the most important source of information resources for the media, and the government naturally affects the media when releasing information to the media. While the earlier Freedom of Information Act provided a legal basis for obtaining media intelligence, it cannot avoid the fact that the core and important American intelligence is still in the hands of the ruling class and leading bodies. Mastering information is equivalent to mastering initiative. The way the US government provides to release information to the media is mainly through press conferences, public speeches by government officials, and partnerships with public relations companies or think tanks. Every morning, the White House press Secretary discusses events at home and abroad with officials, gives a consensus, develops specific publicity plans, guides public opinion skills, notifies government news agencies, and notifies the "White House press corps" of journalists selected by major mainstream media. Many U. S. officials, represented by the President and the Secretary of State, often require public statements. As the most influential public figures, it is not hard to impress the public behind their personal conversation skills, style and excellent PR team. A good example is the White House Press Secretary of former President George w. Bush, who served as a news commentator for National Public Radio and worked on Fox News. Arguably, a White House spokesman can not only give the media what it wants, but also sell the message that the government needs to spread to the public. Us government departments often entrust public relations agencies, think tanks and other research topics to publish comments, write articles, and then publish them through mainstream media.

5.2 The government controls the media

The first is the clear restrictions on laws and regulations. The Freedom of Information Act gives journalists more access, but also lists nine exceptions to ensure national security and the legitimate rights and interests of the people. For example, classified documents identified as those concerning national security or foreign policy, documents concerning the internal personnel system and operations of the federal government, and documents on personal security do not apply to the Freedom of Information Act. Although the First Amendment to the United States Constitution specifies freedom of speech, the Supreme Court has consistently held certain forms of speech unprotected. For example, the president's life cannot be threatened, and the words of slander or riots are not protected.

The United States government has also taken administrative measures to regulate it. The main agencies governing the media are the Federal Communications Commission and the White House Press Office. The main function of the FCC is to manage radio, television, satellite and cable channels within the state and legal boundaries. The White House Press Office mainly checks on the information that the government releases to the media. In wartime, the US government will also set up special agencies to implement wartime news control and inspection policies on the media.

5.3 The Government's use of the media

The American media has a special influence in supervising the government and influencing public opinion, but in many cases, the media will inevitably become the "mouthpiece" of the government. The media unconsciously spreads this information by controlling and purposefully releasing some unique information, because the government wants to guide the development direction of public opinion.

Another use of media by the government is mainly manifested by the use of media as a propaganda tool, especially in wartime propaganda. But it is worth noting that in wartime propaganda, the media might be aware of its role. In other words, there is the direct use of media through strict control, and the informed and active cooperation of the media. The active cooperation of the media with the government during wartime may be motivated by their own interests or their own "patriotic sentiments".

Furthermore, the government builds the image of the government by using the media.

6. Summary

The relationship between the US government and the media is complex, especially in foreign affairs, which can be described as cooperation and struggle. As an independent force, the American media plays an irreplaceable role in supervising the government, ensuring social justice and democracy, and alleviating social contradictions. However, the excessive publicity of media freedom and commercialization can easily lead to the vulgarization, depraved and information inauthenticity of the media industry. Similarly, excessive regulation will also violate citizens' freedom of speech, causing a single voice in the entire media community, and posing a huge obstacle for the media to play a supervisory role. How to balance this relationship is another question worth discussing.

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